

April 1998 (S. Tantitadapitak); and a single bird on 7 February 1999 (S. Tantitadapitak and S. Thongnakcokegruad; P. D. Round *in litt.*). Common Ringed Plover is a generally very rarely reported species throughout South-East Asia. In Myanmar it is known from a single observation of a group of four at Maungdaw, north Arakan in April 1944 (Smythies 1986). There are two records from Peninsular Malaysia: 25 March 1984, near Georgetown, Penang Island and 6 February 1988, Kuala Selangor (Wells 1999). However, the fact that the species occurs annually in Singapore, where an average of 1-4 individuals are reported per migration season, strongly suggests it is possibly greatly overlooked and almost certainly not as rare as the few records indicate.

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Thailand in 1997. I am also much indebted to Serge Hoste for kindly preparing the sonagram and to Philip D. Round for providing new information on the occurrence of *Charadrius hiaticula* in Thailand. Finally, I would like to thank Jim Chance for generous hospitality at Chiang Saen Guest House and for taking the trouble to spread the news on the bird's presence hence allowing many resident Thai birdwatchers to make for the first time acquaintance with this throughout the Oriental region rarely encountered species.

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Minahassa Owl *Tyto inexpectata* at Lore Lindu National Park, Sulawesi, Indonesia in December 1998

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On 16 December 1998 the authors observed and sound recorded Minahassa Owl *Tyto inexpectata* at about 1,700 m elevation in roadside primary lower montane forest near Danau (= Lake) Tambing, Lore Lindu National Park, north-central Sulawesi, Indonesia. It was initially picked up by its infrequently uttered, single hoarse, hissing shriek, typical of the genus, though strikingly different from that of Sulawesi Owl *T. rosenbergii*. In response to tape playback of its sound-recorded territorial call, the bird nearly immediately flew into the lower crown of a tall dead forest tree, where it perched immobile in the torch beam for about 10 minutes, providing excellent views down to about 50 m. Despite considerable efforts we failed to relocate the species during subsequent visits to the area. Our observation represents the second record for Lore Lindu National Park and the first documented definite field observation since 1939 of this virtually unknown species.

On the basis of field notes and sound recordings taken on 16 December 1998 we compiled the following description. A copy of the recordings resides at the British Library National Sound Archive, Wildlife Section, London.

SIZE & STRUCTURE A medium-sized, noticeably compact and stocky though otherwise typical *Tyto*,

featuring a relatively large, rounded head, a large well-defined heart-shaped facial disc, small eyes, a short and hooked bill, long rounded wings, short square tail and long, powerful legs with completely feathered tarsi and strong feet. Obviously much smaller (about one third), plumper, less attenuated and larger headed than Sulawesi Owl *T. rosenbergii* (not seen in direct comparison).

HEAD & NECK Large heart-shaped facial disc dark rusty brown, rather sharply demarcated by extensive dark blackish border, broadest below and on sides. Rest of head dark golden brown, extensively blotched blackish on the crown, which formed the darkest part of the head.

UPPERPARTS Uniformly dark golden brown.

UNDERPARTS Chest whitish. Breast, abdomen and flanks buffish, sparsely patterned with dark brown spots, especially obvious towards the centre of the belly. Feathering of tibia and tarsus and ventral area uniformly off-white.

BARE PARTS Upper mandible entirely yellowish. Feet brownish grey. Eyes black, glowing yellowish pink in the spotlight.

VOICE The territorial call consisted of a single very nasal, hoarse and hissing shriek lasting about 1.8 seconds and delivered infrequently at a rate of once every 5-7 minutes (Figure 1). Sulawesi Owl produces noticeably higher pitched, more explosive, less hoarse and hissing and much shorter screeches, lasting up to about 0.8 seconds and often delivered in series (Figure 2).

Sulawesi Owl *T. rosenbergii* represents the only species possibly confusable with Minahassa Owl and can readily be ruled out by the combination of territorial call, diagnostically much smaller size, large dark rusty brown facial disc (if present) and dark golden brown upperparts with variable blackish blotching, as well as marked differences in general appearance and build. Our bird compared remarkably well to Schlegel's type specimen in RMNH, Leiden except in having the ventral area and feathering of tibia and tarsi clearly off-white. Both taxa, despite exhibiting considerable individual variation, are distinctive and, provided good views are obtained, their identification remains straightforward. A comprehensive treatment of their identification is beyond the scope of this short communication. We would, however, like to draw attention to the fact that *T. inexpectata*, as demonstrated by two specimens present in RMNH, Leiden, clearly may show a pale greyish facial disc as is usually the case with the Sulawesi Owl.

Treated as Data Deficient by Collar *et al.* (1994), Minahassa Owl is historically known from just nine specimen records, originating from three specified localities and one unattributed location in the Minahassa peninsula of north-east Sulawesi between 1876 and 1939 (Bishop 1989). Remarkably on 21 November 1980 an unsexed adult, now housed at BMNH, Tring, was found as a road kill at 675 m elevation within Lore Lindu National Park, north-central Sulawesi (Watling 1983), hence considerably extending the species's known distribution. An eleventh and last, male specimen preserved as a skeleton at NNM/Naturalis, Leiden was

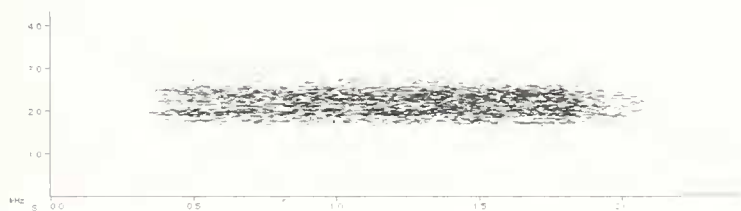


Figure 1. Sonagram of the territorial call of Minahassa Owl *Tyto inexpectata*, 16 December 1998, 1,700 m, near Danau Taming, Lore Lindu National Park, north-central Sulawesi, Indonesia (I. Mauro).

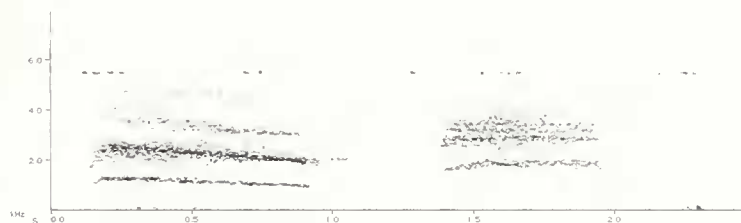


Figure 2. Sonagram of the territorial call of Sulawesi Owl *Tyto rosenbergii*, 04 July 1998, Toraut, Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, north-east Sulawesi, Indonesia (I. Mauro).

found moribund by wardens near the Toraut post, Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, north-east Sulawesi during October 1981. From the same period stems the record of a single feather found a bit further in the interior of the park, between Sungai (=river) Mauk and Sungai Moinakom (Rozendaal and Dekker 1989). As well as being only the second record for Lore Lindu National Park and, at 1,700 m the highest elevational record available for *T. inexpectata*, our sighting constitutes the first documented field observation since 8 April 1939, when a pair was watched attending what appeared to be a nest hole in an *Elmerrillia ovalis* tree on the slopes of Gunung (=mountain) Koemesot by Coomans de Ruiter. A claimed breeding record from early September 1995 at Toraut, Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park, outlined in Fletcher (1998), from the published description clearly refers to *T. rosenbergii*. Another brief sighting at the Toraut post, Bogani Nani Wartabone National Park in July 1987 (Andrew and Holmes 1989) should now probably better be considered tentative (F. Lambert *in litt.*). For a comprehensive review of historical records see Bishop (1989). Minahassa Owl is evidently a very scarce or localized species, though taking its apparently mostly silent, shy and retiring nature and forest-dwelling habits into account, it must almost certainly be greatly overlooked and definitely not as rare as the few records tend to indicate. Collection data suggest that the species, as with *T. rosenbergii*, inhabits quite a wide altitudinal range, where it is thought to be almost entirely confined to increasingly threatened primary lowland, foothill and lower montane forests. *T. inexpectata* has been recorded from two of the largest, biologically most important and best administered national parks on Sulawesi, hence its long-term survival is at present still relatively secure. Nevertheless, as illustrated by near-complete forest clearance within its historical range in the Minahassa peninsula, the species has undoubtedly suffered considerably from forest degradation and fragmentation, with competitive exclusion by *T. rosenbergii* a likely contributory factor in ecologically disturbed areas.

As noted by Watling (1983) the presence of a population of *T. inexpectata* in north-central Sulawesi renders the name Minahassa Owl inappropriate. Sulawesi Golden Owl has previously been suggested by Bishop (1989). Alternatively, we propose the names Lesser Sulawesi Owl for *T. inexpectata* and Greater Sulawesi Owl for *T. rosenbergii*.

R. W. R. J. Dekker, Curator Birds, was most helpful to us when visiting the collection at the National Museum of Natural History (NNM/Naturalis), Leiden, Netherlands. Serge Hoste kindly prepared the sonagrams. Frank Lambert provided additional information from the Asian Red Data Book accounts.

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Hosts of the Common Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius* in India

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In their *Birds of the Indian subcontinent*, Grimmett *et al.* (1998) described the breeding of the Common Hawk Cuckoo thus: 'Breeding: January-June, also later months and varying locally. No certain evidence of which species it brood parasitizes.'

The hosts of this species have been described by many previous authors, summarized by Baker (1934), 'different species of *Argya* [*Turdoides*] and *Turdoides*' and Ali and Ripley (1981), 'chiefly *Turdoides*.. and *Garrulax*'. In case these earlier references have been considered to allow of some uncertainty, we record the following cases from our personal observations, along with additional natural history notes on the species.

In Delhi, during 1970-1974, AJG observed two Common Hawk Cuckoo eggs laid in Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus* nests: one in March and one in April. One of these hatched, and the chick ejected the 3 babbler eggs, and subsequently fledged; the other was removed. Another fledgling Hawk Cuckoo was observed being fed by Jungle Babblers in April.

In Khozikode (Calicut), Kerala, during 1975-1982, two cases of nestling and five of fledgling Common Hawk Cuckoos were observed by VJZ, all being fed by groups of Jungle Babblers. One observation was in March, the rest all in October, eggs being laid, presumably, in September. The period of fledgling dependency in all cases continued for more than one month. Five of these observations involved the same territorial group of Jungle Babblers (for information on Jungle Babbler behaviour, see Gaston 1977).

Because of the long period of fledgling dependency, the hosts of the Common Hawk Cuckoo are relatively easy to determine. It appears that in Delhi and Khozikode the species is rather specific to the Jungle Babbler. In Delhi, Common Babblers *Turdoides caudatus* and Large Grey Babblers *T. malcolmi* are both common, and in Khozikode the Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis* is abundant, but no species other than Jungle

Babbler was recorded as a host. However, in Delhi, Common and Large Grey Babblers both breed principally during the rainy season (June-September), whereas, it appears the Common Hawk Cuckoos prefer to lay in the spring in this area. Nests of all babbler species at Delhi during the rainy season are heavily parasitized by Pied Cuckoos *Clamator jacobinus* (Gaston 1976). Hence the tendency for Hawk Cuckoos to breed in spring around Delhi may be a response to competition from more abundant Pied Cuckoos.

Our records suggest that earlier descriptions of Common Hawk Cuckoo hosts were correct. However, the comment by Ali (1968) that they breed in March-April in Kerala, may have been based on observations elsewhere in India, because our records indicate that September is the preferred month of laying in Kerala; also the main month there for Jungle Babbler breeding (Gaston *et al.* 1979). More information on the breeding seasons of this species in different parts of India would be desirable.

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